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THE PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM.

ORIGINAL DUALISM.

Buddhism originated, as all religions do, from the desire to escape the transiency of life with its incidental vicissitudes and to attain the permanent and enduring bliss of an undisturbed existence where there is no pain, no disease, no death, no incertitudes of any kind. As soon as the prevalence of suffering was recognised as an inalienable condition of bodily existence the first attempt at obtaining deliverance from evil was naturally made by a mortification of the body for the sake of benefiting the soul. The body was looked upon as the source of all misery, and a purely spiritual existence was the ideal in which religious men set their hope of salvation. The body is doomed to die, and was therefore considered as an animated corpse. Our material existence is a body of death of which man must rid himself before he can obtain the deathless state. Thus we read in the story of Sumedha, which serves as an introduction to the *Jatakas*:

“ Even as a man might rid him of
A horrid corpse bound to his neck,
And then upon his way proceed,
Joyous, and free, and unconstrained ;

“ So must I likewise rid me of
This body foul, this charnel-house,
And go my way without a care,
Or least regret for things behind.

“ As men and women rid them of
Their dung upon the refuse heap,

And go their ways without a care,
Or least regret for what they leave ;

" So will I likewise rid me of
This body foul, this charnel-house,
And go my way as if I had
Cast out my filth into the draught." ¹

Sumedha says :

" What misery to be born again !
And have the flesh dissolve at death !

" Subject to birth, old age, disease,
Extinction will I seek to find,
Where no decay is ever known,
Nor death, but all security." ²

The ideal of Buddhahood, accordingly, was in its original shape the attainment of a purely spiritual condition which it was hoped would afford a perfect emancipation from suffering. It was the same yearning as that of the early Christians, expressed in St. Paul's words :

" O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? "

Even Luther, with whom the monistic era of Christianity begins, speaks of his body with the utmost contempt. The term *Madensack*, i. e., a bag full of food for grubs, is a favorite expression of his.

The religious problem, as it presented itself to the ascetic Gautama before he had attained to Buddhahood, was formulated on dualistic principles, but his final solution rested upon a monistic basis. We know little of his philosophical evolution and the phases through which he passed ; but the outcome is unequivocal in all important questions that form decisive test-issues as to the character of his system. He was tolerant and showed extreme patience with all kinds of mythologies, even utilising the supersti-

¹ H. C. Warren, in his *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 7-8. See also the passage quoted from Chapter VI. of the *Visuddhi-Magga*, p. 300.

² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

tions of his age to the enhancement of his religion, but he was merciless in his rejection of metaphysicism and dualism.

ANTI-METAPHYSICAL.

After Buddha had surrendered the old dualism, the traditional formulation of philosophical problems lost their meaning; they became what we now call illegitimate questions; and whenever Buddha was confronted with such illegitimate questions, he either refused to answer them or declared openly: "The question is not rightly put."¹ His refusal to answer such questions, which on his plane of thought had become unmeaning and irrelevant, nay, even misleading, can be interpreted as agnosticism, or as a dodge and attempt at straddling, only by those who utterly misconceive the spirit of Buddha's doctrines. When bored with questions by a wandering ascetic, one of those frivolous wranglers who dispute merely for the sake of discussion, Buddha refuses to answer, but when afterwards Ânanda accosts his master he explains why the wandering ascetic received no reply. The reason is here again the error involved in the wrong formulation of the question. Thus if he had replied in the negative, saying that the âtman does not survive death, the wandering ascetic would have said "the Buddha teaches that there is no after-life"; and if he had replied in the affirmative, saying that the âtman survives death, the implication would have been that Buddha believed with the Vedanta philosophers in the existence of an âtman.

Buddha's monism is not materialism; he does not identify soul and body, he only denies the separate existence of soul-entities. There is soul and there is body. There are consciousness-forms and bodily-forms, and both are changing and developing, both are subject to growth and decay. The body is dissolved, and consciousness passes away, yet their forms reappear in new incarnations. There is death and rebirth, and there is continuity of life with its special and individual types. If the soul were identical with the body, it would perish with it; if it were a distinct entity and an immutable âtman, it would not be affected by conduct and

¹See, for instance, Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 167 and 312.

there would be no use in leading a holy life. In either case there is no need of seeking religion. Buddha's solution is, that there are not two things (1) an âtman and (2) the deeds performed by the âtman, but there is one thing—a soul-activity (karma), which operates by a continuous preservation of its deed-forms or sam-skâras, which are the dispositions produced by the various functions of karma. There is not a being that is born, acts, enjoys itself, suffers and dies and is reborn to die again ; but simply birth, action, enjoyment, suffering, and death take place. The life-activity, the deeds, the karma, the modes of motion in all their peculiar forms, alone are real : they are preserved and nothing else. Man's soul consists of the memory-forms, or dispositions, produced by former karmas. There is no self in itself, no separate âtman ; the self consists in the deed-forms, and every creature is the result of deeds.

The disciples propose to the Blessed One in the *Samyutta-Nikâya* this question :

"Reverend Sir, what are old age and death? and what is it has old age and death?"

The Blessed One replies :

"The question is not rightly put. O priest, to say : 'What are old age and death? and what is it has old age and death?' and to say : 'Old age and death are one thing, but it is another thing which has old age and death,' is to say the same thing in different ways.

"If, O priest, the dogma obtain that the soul and the body are identical, then there is no religious life; or if, O priest, the dogma obtain that the soul is one thing and the body another, then also there is no religious life. Both these extremes, O priest, have been avoided by the Tathâgata, and it is a middle doctrine he teaches : 'On birth depend old age and death.'" (*Buddhism in Translations*, p. 167.)

PERSONALITY.

But considering the practical importance of personal effort in moral endeavor, how can the denial of the existence of a separate self as the condition of personality be useful in religion?

The answer is, that the denial of the existence of a separate self, an âtman, is not a denial of the real self such as it actually ex-

ists in man's personality. There is no chariot in itself, but there are chariots; there are no persons in themselves, but there are persons. Buddha does not intend to wipe out the personalities of man, but only the false notion of the metaphysical character of personality. Not only did Buddha always endeavor to adapt his teachings to different personalities, but we find generally in Buddhism as much stress laid upon the personal relation of a disciple to the master, as by Luther, who used to say that "it is not enough for a Christian to know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour, he must experience the fact in his heart and must be able to say, 'Jesus Christ has come to save me individually.'"¹

There is a similar aspiration in Buddhism, which Buddhagosa, in his comments on the Dhammapada, expresses as follows:

"Now when a Supreme Buddha teaches the Doctrine, those in front and those behind, and those beyond a hundred or a thousand worlds, and those even who inhabit the abode of the Sublime Gods, exclaim: 'The Teacher is looking at *me*; The Teacher is teaching the Doctrine to *me*.' To each one it seems as if the Teacher were beholding and addressing him alone. The Buddhas, they say, resemble the moon: as the moon in the midst of the heavens appears to every living being as if over his head, so the Buddhas appear to every one as if standing in front of him." (*Buddhism in Translations*, p. 470.)

Far from being an obliteration of individuality, the denial of the *âtman* actually involves a liberation of individuality from an error that is liable to stunt all mental growth and hinder man's free development. Buddha takes out of life the vanity of self, which is based upon the dualism of *âtman* and karma as separate realities. There is no need of bothering about an *âtman*, but it is important to be mindful, thoughtful, and energetic in all that a man undertakes and does, for the karma is the stuff of which a man is made. One's own personal endeavor and achievements constitute one's personality, and this personality is preserved beyond death, as we read:

"But every deed a man performs
With body, or with voice, or mind,

¹"Darum ist's nicht genug, dass einer glaubt, es sei Gott, Christus habe gelitten., u. dergl., sondern er muss festiglich glauben, dass Gott ihm zur Seligkeit ein Gott sei, dass Christus für ihn gelitten habe, etc." (Quoted by Köstlin in his *Luther's Theologie*.) Similar passages are frequent in Luther's writings.

'Tis this that he can call his own,
 This with him take as he goes hence.
 This is what follows after him
 And like a shadow ne'er departs."¹

These lines have reference to the parable of the man whom his family, his friends, and his property leave when he is cited before the judge, while his good deeds alone follow him through the gate of death and plead for him. Speaking without allegory, we ought to say that the deeds, or rather the deed-forms, are the man himself.

There is no duality of a doer and his doings, a thinker and his thoughts, an enjoyer and his enjoyments, a sufferer and his sufferings, an aspirer and his aspirations. There is not an âtman that performs karma; but there is karma which, wherever incarnated in an individual group, appears as an âtman. The words doer, agent, enjoyer, etc., are mere modes of speech. The realities of soul-life consist in doings, thoughts, sufferings, enjoyments, and aspirations. Actions take place, and the peculiar form of every action is preserved as an analogous disposition to repeat that same action in the shape of memory-structures; and all living beings start life as the summed-up memory of their deeds in former existences.

THE DEATHLESS.

There is no âtman-soul; accordingly there is no transmigration of an âtman-soul; yet there is rebirth: there is a reincarnation of the ancestral karma by a preservation and reproduction of the soul-forms transmitted from generation to generation.

Here we must make a distinction between pure forms and materialised forms. By the pure form of a right-angled triangle we mean the mathematical conception in its abstract and absolute distinctness. The relations of the angles and sides are definite conditions of unalterable rigidity. They can be formulated in theories which are readily recognised as eternal verities. The materialist who believes that material bodies alone are real, would say that pure forms are non-existent, but the mathematician knows that a

¹ *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 228.

right-angled triangle is a definite actuality which, whenever an occasion arises, will manifest itself with unfailing exactness. Manifestations of right-angled triangles take place in materialised forms, by which we mean some single drawing made in ink, pencil, or chalk, or a relation obtaining somehow among three points represented by the centres of stars or indicated by rays of light. The actualisation of a pure form may be more or less perfect, but it always exemplifies the laws of pure form and is, so to speak, its incarnation. In this sense Plato speaks of ideas as being above time and space, and Schiller sings of the higher realm of pure forms :

"In den höheren Regionen
Wo die reinen Formen wohnen."

For ethical considerations man must learn to identify himself, not with the materialisation of his thought and aspirations, but with their forms ; for the former are transient, the latter eternal. He must let go all attachment to the special and particular embodiment in which his soul appears. He must find his anchorage in that which cannot be destroyed but will last for ever and aye. The pure forms of his soul-being must be understood as possessing him, they shape his brain, the nervous structures of his thoughts, the materialised forms of his sentiments and aspirations ; they dominate his life, his energies, his everything, but not *vice versa* : his bodily incarnation does not lord it over the eternal type which in him becomes manifest. The material elements do not possess the directing faculty, for direction is a formal principle.

In this sense Christ existed since eternity as the divine Logos and became flesh in Jesus ; and Buddha descended from the Tusita Heaven to earth for the purpose of being incarnated in the son of Mâyâ. In this same sense Buddhists speak of attaining to the Bôdhi, i. e. enlightenment or Buddhahood, which implies that the Bôdhi existed before Gautama found it. In the same sense, the right-angled triangle and its law existed before Pythagoras ; he did not invent the theorem that bears his name : he discovered it. The idea of a right-angled triangle with all its essential relations dawned upon him, became incarnated in him, manifested itself in him.

But here we must pause a moment, for here lies a difficulty which has greatly embarrassed the translators of Buddhist scriptures. The Pâli word *rupa* means "form," but it is frequently used in the sense of materialised form (*rupa kayo*), not only in the sense of pure form; indeed, it must sometimes be translated by body. Thus that which Plato and Schiller would call pure form is in Pâli called *arûpo*,¹ "that which is without *rupa*, the bodiless," commonly translated "the formless."

We read in the Buddhist scriptures that the attainment of Nirvâna is not possible unless we comprehend "the formless," which is the unmaterial, the eternal, the deathless. This deathless, this unmaterial, this "formless," or rather this eternal realm of pure form the *arûpaloco* is not an essence, not an entity, not an individual being or a personal deity; it has no special dwelling, nor is it a locality, or a heavenly abode; and yet it is the most important truth to be known.

"There is, O disciples, something not-born, not-originated, not-made, not-formed. If, O disciples, there were not this not-born, not-originated, not-made, not-formed, there would be no escape for the born, the originated, the made, the formed." *Udâna*, VIII., 3.

The deathless is a mere nothing, if "nothing" means absence of materiality, and yet it is the most important factor of life, for it makes enlightenment possible and is the condition of salvation. In the *Majjhima Nikâya* (Sutta 26), in which Buddha declares that "the deathless has been gained," the theory is set forth that the "Nothing" is not a nonentity, but that it exists; and "of the priest who dwells in the realm of nothingness" it is said that "he has blinded Mâra, made useless the eye of Mâra, gone out of sight of the Wicked One."

He who clings to bodily form, i. e., the materialised incarnation of pure form, and identifies his self with this compound of atoms, this aggregation of material elements, is not free from the illusion of selfhood; he has not found the eternal resting place of

¹ Also spelt *âruppo* and *arûpe*. The neuter of *arûpo* (*arûpam*) is used as a synonym of Nirvâna.

life ; the bliss of Nirvâna, the peace of his soul ; he is driven round in a whirl of eternal turmoil, in the saṃsâra of worldly interests, in aspirations for transient goods.

He who has attained *arûpam*, the formless, surrenders with it all petulancy of self, for jealousy, spite, hatred, pride, envy, concupiscence, vainglory—all these and kindred ambitions—have lost their sense. He is energetic, but without passion ; he aspires, but does not cling ; he administers, but does not regard himself an owner ; he acquires, but does not covet. This is expressed in the *Milindapañha*,¹ where we read :

“Said the king, ‘Bhante Nāgasena, what is the difference between one who has passion and one who is free from passion ?’

“‘Your majesty, the one clings, the other does not cling.’

“‘Bhante, what do you mean by “clings” and “does not cling” ?’

“‘Your majesty, the one covets, the other does not covet.’

“‘Bhante, this is the way I look at the matter : both he who has passion and he who is free from passion have the same wish, that his food, whether hard or soft, should be good ; neither wishes for what is bad.’

“‘Your majesty, he that is not free from passion experiences both the taste of that food, and also passion due to that taste, while he who is free from passion experiences the taste of that food, but no passion due to that taste.’”

THE MIDDLE DOCTRINE.

Buddha calls his solution of the psychological problem the middle doctrine, because it avoids both extremes of what, in the terms of the schoolmen, may be called extreme Realism and extreme Nominalism. Buddha denies that there are things in themselves of any kind. Compounds have no existence outside their parts, and man, like other things, animals, plants, chariots, worlds, etc., is a compound. There is no self in man as a separate entity. Self denotes the whole man. He who says compounds are things in themselves is mistaken, but he who denies the existence of compounds, he who proclaims the doctrine of non-existence is mistaken also. Compounds are real enough, the relation among things and their interaction are not mere illusions. While there are no things

¹ Quoted from Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 421. See also *Sacred Books of the East*, XXXV., p. 119.

in themselves, there are forms in themselves. Buddhagosha argues in the *Visudhi-Magga*, Chap. XVIII. :

"Just as the word 'chariot' is but a mode of expression for axle, wheels, chariot-body, pole, and other constituent members, placed in a certain relation to each other, but when we come to examine the members one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no chariot; and just as the word 'house' is but a mode of expression for wood and other constituents of a house, surrounding space in a certain relation, but in the absolute sense there is no house; and just as the word 'fist' is but a mode of expression for the fingers, the thumb, etc., in a certain relation; and the word 'lute' for the body of the lute, strings, etc., 'army' for elephants, horses, etc.; 'city' for fortifications, houses, gates, etc.; 'tree' for trunk, branches, foliage, etc., in a certain relation, but when we come to examine the parts one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no tree; in exactly the same way the words 'living entity' and 'âtman' are but a mode of expression for the presence of the five attachment groups, but when we come to examine the elements of being one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no living entity there to form a basis for such figments as 'I am' or 'I'; in other words, that *in the absolute sense there is only name and form*. The insight of him who perceives this is called knowledge of the truth." (*Ibid.*, p. 133.)

As soon as we abandon the middle doctrine and assume the existence of a self which is supposed to be an entity that is in possession of all the parts of a compound, we must either assume that this entity after the dissolution of its parts will persist or that it will perish; and both views are erroneous because they start from a wrong premise. He who imagines that his self is immortal is mistaken and will cherish foolish ideas as to the mode and place of its future residence. But he who thinks that his self will perish is not less mistaken; he is unnecessarily afraid of death, for there is no self that can perish. Both propositions are senseless, because based on the illusions of either an extreme realism or an extreme nominalism.

He who sees things as they really are ceases to cleave to existence; he does not think that sensation or thought or any one of the aggregates is the âtman, but for that reason his personality is not wiped out.

"He ceases to attach himself to anything in the world, and being free from attachment, he is never agitated, and being never agitated, he attains to Nirvâna in his own person." (*L. c.*, p. 137.)

NOT A DOCTRINE OF ANNIHILATION.

If man is "name and form" and no self in itself, the proposition seems to suggest itself that death ends all; but the doctrine of annihilation is not countenanced by any of the orthodox Buddhists. We read in the *Samyutta Nikaya* (XXII., 85):

"Now at that time the following wicked heresy had sprung up in the mind of a priest named Yamaka: 'Thus do I understand the doctrine taught by the Blessed One, that on the dissolution of the body the priest who has lost all depravity is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death.'" (*L. c.*, p. 138.)

And a number of priests who had heard the report drew near and said:

"Say not so, brother Yamaka. Do not traduce the Blessed One; for it is not well to traduce the Blessed One. The Blessed One would never say that on the dissolution of the body the saint who has lost all depravity is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death." (*Ibid.*)

Then Shâriputra instructs Yamaka by teaching him that there is no such a being as a saint or a man in himself, for all his constituents are transitory and cannot be regarded as his âtman or enduring self; the saint is not bodily form, not sensation, not perception, not any of the predispositions, not consciousness. How then can the saint be annihilated in death? All the constituents of the saint depend upon causation, but holiness and enlightenment are the deathless state which is not touched by death. The *Visuddhi-Magga* comprises this doctrine in these four lines, which sound almost paradoxical:

"Misery only doth exist, none miserable.
No doer is there; naught save the deed is found.
Nirvâna is, but not the man who seeks it.
The Path exists, but not the traveller on it."¹

And is Nirvâna non-existence? Not at all. It is the attainment of the deathless state, of immateriality, of pure form, of eternal verity, of the immutable and enduring, where there is neither

¹ *L. c.*, p. 146.

birth nor death, neither disease nor old age, neither affliction nor misery, neither temptation nor sin.

" 'Wherein does Nirvâna consist?' And to him, whose mind was already averse to passion, the answer came: 'When the fire of lust is extinct, that is Nirvâna; when the fires of hatred and infatuation are extinct, that is Nirvâna; when pride, false belief, and all other passions and torments are extinct, that is Nirvâna.' (L. c., p. 59.)

He who attains Nirvâna continues to exist in his personal identity as pure form of a definite character, but he is without any trace of clinging to a particular incarnation. Thus he is no more re-incarnated in any special individual, and this is the sense in which Buddha has passed away and yet continues to exist in his bodiless personality, as we read in the *Milindapañha*¹:

" 'The king said: 'Is there such a person as the Buddha, Nâgasena?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Can he then, Nâgasena, be pointed out as being here and there?'

" 'The Blessed One, O king, has passed away by that kind of passing away in which nothing remains which could tend to the formation of another individual. It is not possible to point out the Blessed One as being here or there.' "

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH.

The surrender of the self-illusion with its pretensions brings us practically to the same maxim of life which St. Paul sets forth in 1 Cor., vii., 29-30:

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none.

"And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not."

This view does not lead to the neglect of the body, but to its being subservient to higher ends and a nobler cause. The Buddha compares the body to a wound which we nurse although we do not love it. Nâgasena says:

"They who have retired from the world take care of their bodies as though they were wounds, without thereby becoming attached to them. (*Buddhism in Translations*, p. 423. Compare *Sacred Books of the East*, XXXV., p. 115.)

¹See *Sacred Books of the East*, XXXV., pp. 113-114.

All vicissitudes and afflictions affect the bodily incarnation, not the eternal soul, the pure form or the arúpam, or bodiless, i. e., that which is without rupa ; and thus the Saṃyutta Nikâya declares that the saint may be "wretched of body" but can never be "wretched of mind." The actuality of the world, the material reality of existence, the samsâra is absolutely void of permanency. All is transient and nothing endures. Therefore he who sets his heart on anything of the world or its various realisations of form, is sure to suffer ; while he who has understood the emptiness of all material existence seeks refuge in the eternal Nirvâna, the domain of eternal verities which, in comparison to bodily realisations, constitute the Void, the Nothing, the existence-less. The eternal verities are immanent in all reality and condition its evolution ; they are the aim and purpose of life ; they are, to use Goethe's words, "the unattainable of which all actual things are but symbols." They are the nothingness of which we read in the *Majjhima Nikâya* (Sutta 26), that he who dwells in it is "out of the reach of Mâra," the Evil One.

"He has blinded Mâra, made useless the eye of Mâra, gone out of sight of the Wicked One." (*Ib.*, p. 348.)

An ancient Pâli verse (preserved in the *Udâna*, IV., 4) characterises this condition as follows :

"The man whose mind, like to a rock,
Unmovèd stands, and shaketh not ;
Which no delights can e'er inflame,
Or provocations rouse to wrath—
O, whence can trouble come to him,
Who thus hath nobly trained his mind ?"¹

The belief in self, a separate soul-entity or âtman, is the most serious obstacle to the attainment of the eternal and deathless, because the thought of self infuses all creatures with fear of dissolution as well as a desire for this particular and special copy of its own eternal being. The *Visudhi-Magga* (the Book on the Path of Purity) dwells on the subject in Chapter XXI., where we read :

¹ *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 315.

"To one who considers them [the constituents of being] in the light of their transitoriness, the constituents of being seem *perishable*. To one who considers them in the light of their misery, they seem *frightful*. To one who considers them in the light of their want of an Ego, they seem *empty*.

"He who considers them [the constituents of being] in the light of their transitoriness abounds in faith and obtains the *unconditioned* deliverance; he who considers them in the light of their misery, abounds in tranquillity and obtains the *desireless* deliverance; he who considers them in the light of their want of an Ego, abounds in knowledge and obtains the *empty* deliverance." (*Ib.*, p. 379.)

This is said to explain the stanza :

"Behold how empty is the world,
Mogharâja! In thoughtfulness
Let one remove belief in self
And pass beyond the realm of death.
The king of death can never find
The man who thus the world beholds."¹

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY.

The world has been greatly astonished in these latter years by the results reached by modern psychologists, Herbart, Fechner, Weber, Wundt, Ribot, etc., who have arrived at the conclusion that there is no soul-being, a theory which received the paradoxical name of "a psychology without a soul." The name is misleading, for the truth is that modern psychology discards the metaphysical conception of the soul only, not the soul itself. The unity of the soul has ceased to be a monad, an atomistic unity, and is recognised as a unification. The personality of a man is a peculiar idiosyncrasy of psychic forms, a system of sensations, impulses, and motor ideas, but it is not a monad, not a distinct entity, not a separate unit. In a word, there is no soul-entity, or soul-substance, or soul-substratum, that is possessed of sensations, impulses, and motor ideas; but all the sensations, impulses, and motor ideas of a man are themselves part and parcel of his soul. Mr. Hegeler expresses it by saying: "I have not ideas, but I am ideas."

The modern theory of the soul is not quite new, for it was clearly outlined by Kant, who counted the notion of a distinct ego-soul as a contradiction, or, as he termed it, one of the paralogisms

¹*Ib.*, p. 376.

of pure reason. He did not exactly deny the separate existence of an ego, by which he understands apperception as a unit, viz., self-consciousness, but he proved the inconsistency of the assumption and retained the notion only on practical grounds, because he argued that the ego-conception is an idea without which ethics would fall to the ground. Theoretically he rejected the existence of an ego-soul, but for the sake of morality he retained it as a postulate of practical reason.

The ego-soul is nothing but the ancient and famed thing-in-itself in the province of psychology. Metaphysicians of the old school believe that philosophy consists in the search for the thing-in-itself, while the new positivist abandons the idea that there is a separate entity behind or within the parts of things. There is no watch-in-itself; but a peculiar combination of wheels and other mechanical contrivances, together with a dial and the movable hands on the dial, is called a watch. This is as little a denial of the existence of watches as the new psychology is a psychology without a soul. Yet the enemies of the new positivism will still insist that the denial of things-in-themselves implies a philosophical nihilism.

But the new psychology is older still than Kant. As the doctrine of a separate soul prevailed in India among the Brahmans, so the denial of the existence of a separate soul was pronounced more than two thousand years ago by that school of thought which under the leadership of the great Shâkyamuni grew up in opposition to Brahmanism and became known by the name of Buddhism. Not only are the similarities that obtain between modern psychology and Buddhism striking, but we meet also with the same misconceptions and objections. The denial of the existence of a soul-entity is supposed to be a denial of the soul and also of its immortality or its reincarnation.

PROFESSOR OLDENBERG'S VIEW.

Among the expounders of Buddhism Professor Oldenberg of Kiel ranks high. There are others that are his equal, but there is perhaps none who is his superior in scholarship. But with all his philological knowledge, the learned Professor is sadly deficient

in philosophical comprehension. He appears absolutely unable to grasp the significance of the Buddhistic soul-conception, and since his book on Buddha has become a great authority, in Germany almost the sole authority, from which our reading public take their opinions on Buddhism ready-made, his misconceptions have become instilled into the minds of European and American thinkers, and it will be worth while to point out the deficiencies of his propositions.

H. Dharmapâla, the secretary of the Mâha-Bôdhi Society and editor of the Mâha-Bhôdi Journal, the official delegate of Ceylonese Buddhism to the Chicago Parliament of Religions, wrote sorrowfully to me two years ago :

"Professor Oldenberg, the erudite scholar, has not grasped the spirit of the Dharma. He has translated carefully the Pâli words,—and that is all. A philologist may dissect the root of a Pâli word, but it does not make him know the spirit of Buddhism."

I have greatly profited by Professor Oldenberg's researches, which, considered as philological lucubrations, are very valuable, but I have, after all, felt constrained to adopt Mr. Dharmapâla's opinion. I have done so, however, not without hesitation, and not without having previously tried to reach a satisfactory explanation of his position. I shall here briefly call attention to his presentation of the Buddhist soul-conception and then point out the fallacies of his views. Professor Oldenberg says in the chapter entitled "The Soul" :

"It is not incorrect to say that Buddhism denies the existence of soul, but this must not be understood in a sense which would in any way give this thought a materialistic stamp. It might be said with equal propriety that Buddhism denies the existence of the body. The body, and in the same sense the soul also, does not exist as distinct and self-sustaining substances, but only as a complex of manifold interconnected processes of origination and de cease. Sensations, perceptions, and all those processes which make up the inner life, crowd upon one another in motley variety ; in the centre of this changing plurality stands consciousness (*viññâna*), which, if the body be compared to a state, may be spoken of as the ruler of this state."¹ But consciousness is not essentially different from perceptions and sensa-

¹ "The following passage is often repeated in the sacred texts (e. g., in the 'Sâmaññaphala Sutta') : 'This is my body, the material, framed out of the four

tions, the comings and goings of which it at the same time superintends and regulates : it is also a Sankhâra, and like all other Sankhâras, it is changeable and without substance."

Professor Oldenberg adds :

"We must here divest ourselves wholly of all customary modes of thinking. We are accustomed to realise our inner life as a comprehensible factor, only when we are allowed to refer its changing ingredients, every individual feeling, every distinct act of the will, to one and the same identical ego, but this mode of thinking is fundamentally opposed to Buddhism. Here as everywhere it condemns that fixity which we are prone to give to the current of incidents that come and go by conceiving a substance, to or in which they might happen. A seeing, a hearing, a conceiving, above all a suffering, takes place : but an existence, which may be regarded as the seer, the hearer, the sufferer, is not recognised in Buddhist teaching." (*Buddha*. By Dr. Hermann Oldenberg. English Translation, p. 253.)

This is exactly the same as in modern psychology. The assumption of a soul-substance has been found to be a perfectly redundant hypothesis. The soul of man with all its various structures, or, as Buddhists would say, "samskâras," is now conceived as a product of evolution. Life develops the various sense-organs in response to the stimuli of the surrounding world. The function of seeing which is a reaction taking place in response to the impact of the ether-waves of light, results in the appearance of eyes, the function of hearing being a reaction in response to the impact of the air-waves of sound, produces the ear, and the interaction among the senses begets thoughts. The translator of Oldenberg's book, Mr. William Hoey, is not happy in his selection of words, for he says in the passage quoted :

"Sensations, perceptions, and all the processes which make up the inner life, crowd upon one another in motley variety."

Where Oldenberg speaks of *ineinanderströmen* (streaming one into the other), the expression "motley variety" is a redundant addition, and conveys the idea that Buddhistic philosophy regards

elements, begotten by my father and mother . . . , but that is my consciousness, which clings firmly thereto, is joined to it. Like a precious stone, beautiful and valuable, octahedral, well polished, clear and pure, adorned with all perfection, to which a string is attached, blue or yellow, red or white, or a yellowish band."

the soul as a motley crowd of processes. Oldenberg perused the manuscript before it went to press, and it is probable that he took no offence at the expression; indeed the context appears to justify the translator. We would not hold Oldenberg responsible for mis-translations, but English readers know him through the translation only, and for their benefit we feel urged to add a few words in explanation.

Far from regarding the inter-relations of thoughts and sensations as a chance conglomeration, Nâgasena, the famous expositor of Buddhistic philosophy, makes the very opposite statement which in spite of its importance, is nowhere mentioned in Professor Oldenberg's work on Buddha.

We read in the *Milindapañha*:

"It is by a process of evolution that the soul-structures (sankhâras) come to be."

And this statement is inculcated again and again, not less than seven times—a strange anticipation of the evolution theory! And then we read that these soul-faculties that originate through evolution "are not combined indiscriminately" (I. 6, *Sacred Books of the East*, XXXV., p. 87). "First is sight and then thought," for "all that happens happens through natural slope" (p. 90) "because of habit" (pp. 89 and 91) and "on account of an association" (p. 89). In the same sense modern psychologists speak of the "path of least resistance," and the principle of association is so highly appreciated that the English school calls its doctrine the "psychology of association." There is certainly no justification for such a term as "motley variety" in characterising Buddhist psychology. On the contrary, we should be astonished at the anticipations of the most modern ideas.

Those who are accustomed to refer all psychic activity to one and the same identical ego, must, as Professor Oldenberg says, divest themselves of their customary modes of thinking; and he tries hard to do so himself, but he does not succeed.

The new psychology is, in fact, as much simpler than the old one as the Copernican system is simpler than the Ptolemaic sys-

tem, but in order to appreciate this truth we must be acquainted with the facts. The geocentric astronomy appears natural to him who believes that there is an upside and a down, not only on earth, but also in the heavens; and the egocentric psychology is that childlike soul-conception which knows nothing of evolution, but assumes that a stork or other messenger brings into the world at the moment of birth a soul, we do not know whence, which soul is made the lord of the new-born baby with all his inherited tendencies. A certain amount of knowledge is necessary to comprehend the new views in both sciences, but he who has outgrown his mental swaddling clothes will not fail to abandon both the geocentric view in astronomy and the egocentric view in psychology.

VACCHAGOTTA'S QUESTION.

Professor Oldenberg believes that not only the negation of the ego but also the negation of an eternal future must be regarded as the correct solution of the Buddhistic dialectic, and he claims that this was not openly pronounced by the Buddha because he feared to shock the hearts that quailed before the nothing. And yet Oldenberg quotes at the same time the passage of the *Samyuttaka Nikāya* in which the doctrine of annihilation is squarely denounced as a heresy. We read :

“ ‘At this time a monk named Yamaka had adopted the following heretical notion : “I understand the doctrine taught by the Exalted One to be this, that a monk who is free from sin, when his body dissolves, is subject to annihilation, that he passes away, that he does not exist beyond death.” ’ ” (Oldenberg, *Buddha*, Engl. ed., p. 281.)

When Sāriputta convinces Yamaka that he does not even in this world appreciate the Perfect One, the monk confesses his error and he says :

“ ‘Such, indeed, was hitherto, friend Sāriputta, the heretical view which I ignorantly entertained. But now when I hear the venerable Sāriputta expound the doctrine, the heretical view has lost its hold of me, and I have learned the doctrine.’ ” (*Ib.*, p. 282.)

In spite of innumerable passages which prove that Nirvāna is not annihilation, Oldenberg declares that “the doctrine that there

is no ego is equivalent to the proposition : The Nirvâna is annihilation." Professor Oldenberg adds :

"But we can well understand why these thinkers, who were in a position to realise this ultimate consequence and to bear it, abandoned the erection of it as an official dogma of the Buddhist order. There were enough, and more than enough of hopes and wishes, from which he who desired to follow the Sakya's son, had to sever his heart. Why present to the weak the keen edge of the truth : the victor's prize of the delivered is the Nothing ? True, it is not permissible to put falsehood in the place of truth, but it is allowable to draw a well-meant veil over the picture of the truth, the sight of which threatens the destruction of the unprepared. What harm did it do ? That which was alone of intrinsic worth and essential to excite the struggle for deliverance was maintained in unimpaired force, the certainty that deliverance is to be found only where joys and sorrows of this world have ceased. Was the emancipation of him, who knew how to free himself from everything transitory, not perfect enough ? Would it become more perfect if he were driven to acknowledge that beside the transitory there is only the Nothing ?" (*Ib.*, 273, 274.)

Buddha, it is true, limited himself to that which conduces to deliverance, holiness, peace, and enlightenment, and gave no answer to questioners who were not prepared to understand his doctrine. Thus Oldenberg quotes the following passage from the *Samyuttaka Nikâya* :

"Then the wandering monk¹ Vacchagotta went to where the Exalted One was staying. When he had come near him he saluted him. When, saluting him, he had interchanged friendly words with him, he sat down beside him. Sitting beside him the wandering monk Vacchagotta spake to the Exalted One, saying : "How does the matter stand, venerable Gotama, is there the ego (attâ) ?"

"When he said this, the Exalted One was silent.

"How, then, venerable Gotama, is there not the ego ?"

"And still the Exalted One maintained silence. Then the wandering monk Vacchagotta rose from his seat and went away.

"But the venerable Ânanda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta had gone to a distance, soon said to the Exalted One : 'Wherefore, sire, has the Exalted One not given an answer to the questions put by the wandering monk Vacchagotta ?'

"If I, Ânanda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me : 'Is there the ego ?' had answered : 'The ego is,' then that, Ânanda, would have confirmed the doctrine of the Samanas and Brahmanas who believe in permanence. If I,

¹A monk of a non-Buddhistic sect. The dialogue here translated is to be found in the *Samyuttaka Nikâya*, Vol. II., fol. tan.

Ânanda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me : "Is there not the ego?" had answered : "The ego is not," then that, Ânanda, would have confirmed the doctrine of the Samanas and Brahmanas, who believe in annihilation. If I, Ânanda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me : "Is there the ego?" had answered : "The ego is," would that have served my end, Ânanda, by producing in him the knowledge : all existences (dhamma) are non-ego?

"That it would not, sire."

"But if I, Ânanda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me : "Is there not the ego?" had answered : "The ego is not," then that, Ânanda, would only have caused the wandering monk Vacchagotta to be thrown from one bewilderment into another : "My ego, did it not exist before? but now it exists no longer."'"

Oldenberg's interpretation of this passage is as follows :

"We see : the person who has framed this dialogue has in his thought very nearly approached the consequence which leads to the negation of the ego. It may almost be said that, though probably he did not wish to express this consequence with overt consciousness, yet he has in fact expressed it. If Buddha avoids the negation of the existence of the ego, he does so in order not to shock a weak-minded hearer." (*Ib.*, 272, 273.)

Any one who understands the doctrine of modern psychology will appreciate Buddha's silence, which is amply explained by Buddha's words. Buddha refuses to answer the questions of Vacchagotta, but he gives a satisfactory explanation to Ânanda.

It appears that Vacchagotta was a man who exhibited a hopeless confusion concerning the fundamental notions of the Buddhist psychology. Buddha, it is true, denied the existence of an ego-soul; he denied that that something in man which says "I" can be regarded as a metaphysical soul-principle lording it over all the faculties of man; but Buddha does not deny the reality of man's actual soul, his sensations and motor ideas; he does not deny the presence of consciousness, nor that there is a psychic structure in him that says "I." On the other hand, he does not teach that the soul of man (his sankhâras) will be annihilated in death. He teaches reincarnation, man's soul-structures will reappear, or rather they continue to exist after death. They are impressed upon others, and there is no annihilation; they are preserved exactly in the way in which they manifested themselves. Thus Vacchagotta's question

could not be answered with a straightforward Yes or No. A simple Yes or No would under all conditions simply have increased the questioner's confusion. The question could be answered only after a discussion and complete explanation of the meaning of the term *ego*, which for reasons not mentioned in the dialogue the Buddha did not see fit to make. Probably he deemed it a waste of time to have a controversy with a professional controversialist and therefore refused to accept his challenge.

Suppose a carpenter's apprentice without education who understood nothing of mathematics, had approached the late Professor Gauss of Göttingen and asked him : "I understand that the Professor denies the reality of circles and lines, that he declares they are purely mental, ideal products of imagination, and quite unsubstantial? Will not the learned Professor answer my question squarely and in a straightforward manner, without reserve and without shirking the issue, Is mathematics substantial or is it not substantial?" What would Professor Gauss have said? Had he said, "mathematical figures are substantial," the apprentice would have acquired an erroneous notion regarding the nature of mathematics ; but had the Professor said "Mathematics are unsubstantial and purely ideal," the young fellow would have thought that mathematical constructions were arbitrary and imaginary like dreams. Professor Gauss would probably not have answered the question at all, for whatever he might have said, it would have been bewildering to the questioner. Now, should we say, on reading the report of such an interview, that Professor Gauss had practically taught the non-existence of mathematics ? And could we presume that we understood why he avoided to draw the last conclusion of his doctrine ; namely, for the reason that he did not want to shock the weak-minded hearer who still clung to the idea that there is a substance of mathematics?

Professor Oldenberg's interpretation of the passage quoted from the *Samyuttaka Nikâya* would make of the Buddha a hypocrite or a coward, for it represents him as not willing to concede the last consequence of his doctrine and without directly telling a lie as trying to make a false impression upon his interviewer. If Vac-

chagotta had been one of Buddha's followers, there might have been a reason for Buddha's not shocking his religious faith, but Vacchagotta belonged to a non-Buddhistic sect, and his question was not made in anxiety or with quivering lips. The context of the passage refutes Professor Oldenberg's interpretation.

Why not understand the passage as it reads? Had the Buddha said "the ego is not," Vacchagotta would imagine that the Buddha believed in annihilation, a doctrine which is unequivocally condemned in the Buddhist canon as a heresy. According to Professor Oldenberg, however, this would be the true import of the Buddhist religion. Vacchagotta, relying on the fact that his ego-consciousness was real, would say: "Did not my ego exist before? and now I am told that there is no ego." In the same way the hypothetical carpenter's apprentice in his interview with Professor Gauss would have said: "The lines which I use in measuring beams and boards are real; and yet this man who is supposed to be a great authority in mathematics tells me that mathematical lines are purely ideal!" We cannot help thinking that if Professor Oldenberg had asked the Buddha whether or not he taught the immortality of the ego, the Buddha would have given him the same answer as he did Vacchagotta: he would have remained silent.

Professor Oldenberg takes a denial of the existence of the ego-soul as a denial of the existence of the soul itself, in the same way that the carpenter's apprentice might have understood that Professor Gauss, not believing in a mathematical substance, denied the existence of mathematics altogether. Truly, to understand Buddhism, we must have an inkling of the fundamental notions of philosophy, and with all due respect for Professor Oldenberg's philological erudition, we cannot help saying that philosophical comprehension is a weakness of his which renders him unable to grasp the meaning of Buddhism.

The soul, according to Buddhism, does not consist of substance but consists of *sankhâras*, which are sentient structures or forms produced by deeds, by karma, or function. A man's personality is name and form. The name may be preserved and the form may

reappear in new generations. The individual dies, but its form continues by rebirth. There is no individuality in the sense of the Brahmanical âtman theory, but the individuality of a man, his name and form are for that reason real enough ; and name and form are either singly, or sometimes together, preserved and reindividualised. There is a continuity in life in which the same form is preserved, and this continuous preservation of form is all that is and can be meant by sameness of personality. This is the secret (if there be any secret about it) of the Buddhist psychology.

IS NIRVÂNA ANNIHILATION ?

Professor Oldenberg's conception of Buddhism differs from mine ; he says in a letter to me :

"Buddhism, in my opinion, suffers from the contradiction, historically quite conceivable, that on the one hand, it retains the old, concrete, and popular conception of a transmigration of the soul, on the other hand dissolves in its philosophy the idea of a soul as a substratum, an ego-being. This is a contradiction which will never be overcome by your attempt at sublimating the category of karma. Had Buddha not believed in a transmigration of the soul, suicide should have appeared to him as the quickest and best adapted means of making an end of suffering. A few drops of prussic acid would be a better, and at any rate a more rapid remedy than the holy eightfold path."

If this opinion of the learned Pâli Professor be tenable, the Buddha, who is generally regarded as one of the keenest thinkers that ever lived on earth, would have both denied the existence of a thing and at the same time have taught that it migrated from place to place. And we are requested to believe that the Buddha should have been guilty of such a gross contradiction ! No, I would rather run the risk of doubting the infallibility of a German professor !

While Professor Oldenberg's summary solution is *prima facie* improbable, it is at the same time based upon incorrectly-stated facts. Buddhism teaches reincarnation, but it does not teach the migration of the soul. Professor Oldenberg's book, although good in many respects, is very deficient in its exposition of the Buddhist psychology, which is just the most important part of Buddhism.

Oldenberg must have overlooked the passages in which the theory of soul-migration, in the sense of an ego-soul migrating from one body into another, is rejected. Buddhism denies that the soul is a substance, and in spite of Professor Oldenberg's statement to the contrary, it denies also most emphatically and unequivocally that there can be any transmigration or transportation of soul-substance. Yet Buddhism asserts the reappearance of the same soul-forms. We read in the *Questions of King Milinda*, III., 5, (*Sacred Books of the East*, XXXV., p. 111) :

"Where there is no transmigration, Nâgasena, can there be rebirth?"

"Yes, there can."

"But how can that be? Give me an illustration."

"Suppose a man, O king, were to light a lamp from another lamp, can it be said that the one transmigrates from, or to, the other?"

"Certainly not."

"Just so, great king, is rebirth without transmigration."

"Give me a further illustration."

"Do you recollect, great king, having learnt, when you were a boy, some verse or other from your teacher?"

"Yes, I recollect that."

"Well, then, did that verse transmigrate from your teacher?"

"Certainly not."

"Just so, great king, is rebirth without transmigration."

"Very good, Nâgasena!"

In the Jataka tales and other popular legends expressions are frequently retained which suggest the old Brahmanical conception of a transmigration of soul, but philosophical expositions of the problem leave no doubt about the meaning of the Buddhistic idea of rebirth. At any rate, here is a plain statement in one of the most famous and authoritative Buddhist scriptures, which denies that there is any transmigration of a soul-entity; and thus Professor Oldenberg's charge of inconsistency falls to the ground, as it rests on a misstatement of the Buddhist faith.

Here is another example, adduced by Nâgasena in the *Milinda-panha* :

The mango that is planted rots away in the ground, but it is reborn in the mangoes of the tree that grows from its seed. He

who steals the fruit steals the property of him who sowed the mango. There is no transmigration of a mango-soul from the seed to the fruit, but there is a reconstruction of its form. Thus (as said he who came from Nazareth) the body of a man can be broken down like a temple that is destroyed, but it can and will be built up again. The life of a man does not end with death, for his soul is reincarnated again and again.

And how does this transfer of soul take place? Partly by heredity as is explained by Nâgasena in the illustration of the mango seed, partly by communication. A particular man is not a discrete individual, but a trysting-place of soul-activities, of *sankhâras*, which are impressed into him by example and education. Thus, a boy in school learns a verse by heart; there is no transfer of soul-substance migrating from the teacher to the pupil, but there is a reincarnation of a certain soul-form. The teacher's words are impressed into the boy; and this is called by Nâgasena "rebirth without transmigration."

Similar passages and similes in explanation of the same idea are found in the *Visudhi-Magga*, where the transfer of soul is illustrated by the reappearance of the form of a face in the mirror, of a voice in its echo, of a seal in its imprint, etc.

Professor Oldenberg knows very well that Nirvâna in the Buddhist texts is not annihilation, but deliverance from evil; and there are innumerable passages which characterise it as the state of highest bliss. Professor Oldenberg quotes several passages from various sources, which corroborate the positive conception of Nirvâna. He says:

"Buddhist proverbs attribute in innumerable passages the possession of Nirvâna to the saint, who still treads the earth:

" 'The disciple who has put off lust and desire, rich in wisdom, has here on earth attained the deliverance from death, the rest, the Nirvâna, the eternal state.' Suttasangaha, fol. cû., a Brahmanical ascetic addresses to Sâriputta this question: 'Nirvâna, Nirvâna, so they say, friend Sâriputta. But what is the Nirvâna, friend?' 'The subjugation of desire, the subjugation of hatred, the subjugation of perplexity; this, O friend, is called Nirvâna.' " (*L. c.*, p. 264.)

But Nirvâna may be the *summum bonum*, because it involves the

cutting off of the cause of existence, and the state of Nirvâna may become an actual annihilation at the moment of death. Yet even the final goal of saintship is not characterised as an absolute extinction. Professor Oldenberg quotes the following passages from the *Udâna* (fol. ghau) :

“‘There is, O disciples, a state, where there is neither earth nor water, neither light nor air, neither infinity of space, nor infinity of reason, nor absolute void, nor the co-extinction of perception and non-perception, neither this world nor that world, both sun and moon. That, O disciples, I term neither coming nor going nor standing, neither death nor birth. It is without basis, without procession, without cessation : that is the end of sorrow.

“‘There is, O disciples, an unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed. Were there not, O disciples, this unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed, there would be no possible exit from the world of the born, originated, created, formed.’”

Professor Oldenberg adds the following comments :

“‘These words seem to sound as if we heard Brahmanical philosophers talking of the Brahma, the unborn, intransient which is neither great nor small, the name of which is ‘No, No,’ for no word can exhaust its being. Yet these expressions, when viewed in the connexion of Buddhist thought, convey something wholly different. To the Brahman the uncreated is so veritable a reality, that the reality of the created pales before it ; the created derives its being and life solely from the uncreated. For the Buddhist the words ‘there is an uncreated’ merely signify that the created can free himself from the curse of being created (in the ‘Dhammapada’ it is said, v. 383) : ‘If thou hast learned the destruction of the sankhâra, thou knowest the uncreated’—there is a path from the world of the created out into dark endlessness. Does the path lead into a new existence ? Does it lead into the Nothing ? The Buddhist creed rests in delicate equipoise between the two. The longing of the heart that craves the eternal has not nothing, and yet the thought has not a something, which it might firmly grasp. Farther off the idea of the endless, the eternal could not withdraw itself from belief than it has done here, where, like a gentle flutter on the point of merging in the Nothing, it threatens to evade the gaze.” (*Ib.*, p. 283, 284.)

Is there no other interpretation of the quoted passages than the one offered by Professor Oldenberg, viz., that the Buddhist faith is equivocal, and that it leaves the question undecided, either as an “unfathomable mystery,” or as “resting in a delicate equipoise between the idea of a new existence and nothing” ?

It would be difficult here for any man to speak authoritatively,

but it appears to me the solution is not far to seek. The attainment of Nirvâna consists in enlightenment, that is to say, in a recognition of the fundamental truths of religion, which in their practical application are expressed in the noble eightfold path of righteousness. All individual craving has disappeared in the saint; he has become an incarnation of truth, not of theoretical or purely scientific notions concerning the nature of things, but of practical truth which manifests itself in a moral life. Thus Nirvâna is actually an utter annihilation of the thought of self and an embodiment of universal love and righteousness. Those eternal conditions which constitute righteousness are realised in a human heart.

If we translate Buddhist thought into Christian terms, we would say that the attainment of Nirvâna means God-incarnation, and the Buddha is the God-man. Shall we say that the eternal conditions of righteousness are a mere nothing, because they are unsubstantial? Are they non-existent because they are not concrete things, not material objects? That would certainly lead to a serious misconception of the most important facts of existence!

Further, must God be considered as a non-entity when we learn to understand that God is not an individual being? Dwindles the Christian idea of Heaven away, because astronomy finds no place for it in the stars? There are things spiritual the existence of which does not depend upon a definite locality. The Pythagorean theorem is true, and would remain true, even if the world existed no longer. It is an eternal verity and not a mere nothing. This is illustrated in the "Questions of King Milinda" as follows:

"The king said: 'Venerable Nâgasena, where does wisdom dwell?'

"'Nowhere, O king.'

"'Then, sir, there is no such thing as wisdom.'

"'Where does the wind dwell, O king?'

"'Not anywhere, sir.'

"'So there is no such thing as wind.'

"'Well answered, Nâgasena.'"

It may be difficult to the untrained to understand the paramount importance of eternal verities, but no one can deny their actual presence in life. What other meaning can there be in the

words of Christ when he says: "Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away." The Buddha utters the same sentiment. He says:

"The Buddhas are beings whose word cannot fail; there is no deviation from truth in their speech," etc. (*Buddhist Birth Stories*, p. 18.)

The words of Buddha are not merely the sankhâras of his individual existence, but the eternal verities which shall not pass away, and he who realises them in his soul has attained Nirvâna.

Now, I can see Professor Oldenberg smile, and hear him say, "That is what I mean; Nirvâna is, according to Buddha, the attainment of the eternal verities, and nothing else; accordingly it is tantamount to extinction. Nirvâna is not a place, and the Buddha after his death is no longer a definite individuality that can be pointed out to be here or there. *Ergo* he is dissolved into nothing." To be identical with verities that are eternal but have no dwelling place in space is, in the opinion of many, an annihilation; for ubiquity and nullibility are to their minds two expressions of one and the same thing. Kepler's soul has become the recognition of the three famous laws that bear his name; Ludolf is identified with the calculation of π ; Newton with the formulation of the law of gravitation. They attained, each one in his own way, some special aspect of the uncreated, the eternal, the unborn. In the same way the Buddha (in the Buddhistic conception) has become the moral law which is, ever was, and shall remain forever the path of delivery from evil. Immortality is claimed for the Keplers, the Ludolfs, and Newtons, not for their names alone, because their names might be forgotten, but for their souls, for their ideas, for the verities with which they have become identical; and in the same sense, only in the broader field of religious truth, Buddhists believe in the eternal omnipresence of the Buddha. If that be nothing, then "Nothing" stands for the highest and noblest that can be thought of, and Nothing would be the divinest thing in the universe. Indeed, those invisible realities which, when recognised, are called truths, are of greater importance than concrete things and individual beings.

This is plain to every one who understands that truths are real, even though they are not substances or entities. And the same is true of the soul. To deny that volition, cognition and other mental activities are substances, or entities, or that they need a substratum or metaphysical subject in order to be real, is not a denial of their existence—it is simply the consistent consequence of the commonly acknowledged truth that they are not material.

Here lies the main difficulty in understanding Buddhism, which, whether we praise it or condemn it, must be recognised as the most philosophical of all religions. There is no use in understanding the words of the Buddhist texts, if we have no comprehension of their meaning. And how gross Professor Oldenberg's conception is, appears from his proposition that unless Buddha had been guilty of the inconsistency of believing in soul-transmigration, suicide would have been a better remedy for the evils of existence than the noble eightfold path of righteousness.

Suicide causes the dissolution of the individual ; it sets an example which in the hearts of others will, according to circumstance, bear evil fruit ; it causes consternation and unrest, and can therefore not lead to the cessation of suffering ; under no condition could it conduce to the attainment of Nirvâna. He who imagines that but for the supposition of a transmigration of soul, suicide would be a more appropriate and safer method of reaching Nirvâna than the eightfold path of righteousness, has no inkling of the significance of Nirvâna.

Whatever error I may be guilty of in my own representations of Buddhism, be it in essays that I have written or in the *Gospel of Buddha*, this much is sure, that Professor Oldenberg has misunderstood its most salient doctrines, those on the nature of the soul and of Nirvâna. Being a professor who has studied the southern canon of Buddhism in its original documents, he is by many people looked upon as the greatest living authority on the subject, and he can therefore not fail to propagate his misconceptions. Misconceptions in all fields of thought are unavoidable, but if they originate in men who are called upon to be the channels of our information, the result will be sad.

Professor Oldenberg is a good scholar, and, I repeat, I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to him as a philologist; he may also be a good historian, but he has shown himself to be incompetent as an interpreter of Buddhism. His expositions remind us of the parable of the hardwood,¹ that is related in the *Majjhima-nikāyo*, where we read :

“ It is exactly, O monks, as if a man who demands hardwood, seeks for hardwood, and looks out for hardwood, climbs over the hardwood of a big hardwood tree, over the greenwood, over the bark, to the boughs and cuts off a twig, taking it along with the idea ‘that is hardwood.’ Suppose that a clear-sighted man observes him, saying : ‘This good man really knows neither hardwood, nor greenwood, nor bark, nor boughs, nor foliage, therefore this good man who demands hardwood, seeks for hardwood, looks out for hardwood, climbs straightway over the hardwood of a large hardwood tree, over the greenwood, over the bark, and cuts off a twig in the opinion that it is hardwood. But the hardwood which he will get from the hardwood of the twig will not serve his purpose.’ ”

Professor Oldenberg has devoted his life to the decipherment of Sanskrit and Pāli, but he has failed to comprehend the significance of Buddhism. He has climbed over the hardwood of the doctrine of the Buddha without comprehending either its import or possible usefulness, and, presenting us with the foliage of externalities, assures us that this is the hardwood of Buddhism.

CONCLUSION.

Buddhism is decidedly not nihilism, and Nirvāna does not mean annihilation. Buddhism in its purest form is, more than any other religion, stated in philosophical terms, which, the more positively philosophical they are, will naturally appear to unphilosophical minds as mere negations.

Christians find it difficult to comprehend Buddhism, but the fact remains that what Christianity has been to Western peoples, Buddhism was to the nations of the East; and all the dissimilarities will in the end only serve to render the similarities that obtain between them the more remarkable.

While we are not blind to the great preferences of Christianity,

¹ See Karl Eugen Neumann, *Die Reden Gotamo Buddho's*, p. 304-325.

we must grant that Buddhism is a truly cosmopolitan religion. Buddhism can comprehend other religions and interpret their mythologies, but no mythology is wide enough to comprehend Buddhism. Buddhism is, as it were, religious mythology explained in scientific terms ; it is the esoteric secret of all exoteric doctrines. It is the skeleton key which in its abstract simplicity fits all locks.

This is the reason why Buddhism can adapt itself to almost any condition and can satisfy the spiritual needs of great and small, high and low, of the learned as well as the uncultured. It offers food for thought to the philosopher, comfort to the afflicted, and affords a stay to those that struggle. It is a guide through the temptations of life and a lesson to those in danger of straying from the right path. And yet it demands no belief in the impossible ; it dispenses with miracles, it assumes no authority except the illumination of a right comprehension of the facts of existence.

EDITOR.